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Comparisons of Beef Buffalo and Beef Cattle Farming in Northeastern Thailand

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Abstract

The number of cattle in Thailand increased between the years 1996 and 2005 whereas the number of buffaloes declined during this period. The objective of this study was to analyse the main reasons for this development. Therefore 121 farmers in the Nakhon Ratchasima province were interviewed with a semi-structured questionnaire between October 2007 and May 2008. Beef buffaloes were usually kept in a simple and rough housing compared to beef cattle. Moreover, beef buffalo farms were rarely supplied livestock facilities by the farmers compared to the support of the beef cattle keepers. Farmers mentioned high drought and heat tolerance, high favourite meat and attractive appearance of the animal as favourable traits for beef cattle, while high fertility, properly feeding behaviours (neat and low selective grazing), high feed intake, good body condition, large body size, high meat production, friendly temperament and high animal price were mentioned as favourable traits for beef buffaloes. Management difficulties including more selective grazing, quick walk, trend to damage cropping and hard to handle were the main constraints for beef cattle farming stated by 67 % of the keepers, while lack of public water resource for reducing heat stress by lying in mudholes was the main constraint for beef buffalo farming mentioned by 57 % of the farmers. Farmers (63 %) also perceived the lack of public water resource as the most important reason for the decrease of the buffalo population.

Although beef buffaloes are relatively easy to manage and have many satisfactory traits compared to beef cattle, their production is suffering from the very serious constraint. This needs to be taken into consideration by the government in order to sustain the regional buffalo meat production.

Keywords: Beef buffaloes, beef cattle, farming constraints, favourable traits, water resources